
Pain Glossary

Narcotic

"Narcotic" is a legal, not a scientific term which denotes some of the drugs that are controlled under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, and the U.S. Controlled Substances Act (CSA). Under the Single Convention and CSA, substances such as the opioids are classified as narcotics. Marijuana and cocaine are also legally classified as "narcotics." When discussing pain relief, we avoid use of "narcotic", preferring "opiate" or "opioid".

Opiate

"Opiate" refers to drugs whose origin is the opium poppy, including codeine and morphine.

Opioid

"Opioid" is a scientific term denoting both natural (codeine, morphine) and synthetic (methadone, fentanyl) drugs, and whose pharmacological effects are mediated by specific receptors in the nervous system. "Opioid" also applies to agonists and antagonists with morphine - like activity.

Tolerance

"Tolerance" refers to the physical adaptation of the body to an opioid resulting in the need to increase the dose to achieve the same effect, as in "analgesic tolerance", or as in the reduction in a response (such as sedation) with repeated administration of drug.

Physical dependence

"Physical dependence" also describes the physical adaptation of the body to the presence of an opioid; it is characterized by signs of withdrawal when use of an opioid is stopped abruptly, or when an opioid antagonist is administered to an individual who has been on chronic opioid therapy.

Psychological dependence

"Psychological dependence" is a behavioral pattern characterized by a compulsion to obtain a drug for mood altering effects.

Addiction

"Addiction" is a sociologic term which refers to compulsive drug use, psychological dependence, and continuing use despite harm. Neither physical dependence nor tolerance are sufficient to define "addiction." In the past as well as in present day language "addiction" is frequently and incorrectly equated with physical dependence and withdrawal. "Addiction" and related terms such as "addict" are used in narcotic control laws and are sometimes inappropriately defined to include physical dependence, thereby confusing pain patients with addicts.

Cancer Pain Relief, Second Edition, With a guide to opioid availability, World Health Organization, 1996.

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Remember: Whenever you are using a sustained release narcotic analgesic you must write additional orders for immediate acting narcotics for breakthrough pain.

Equivalencies:

<u>Narcotic</u>	<u>Equi-analgesic Dose</u> (Only oral potencies listed)
Codeine	60 mg
Morphine	15 mg all values approximate
Hydrocodone	10 mg
Oxycodone	7.5 mg

Duragesic 25 mcg = 30-60 mg oral morphine

Editor's Note

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